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RAIL TRAVEL

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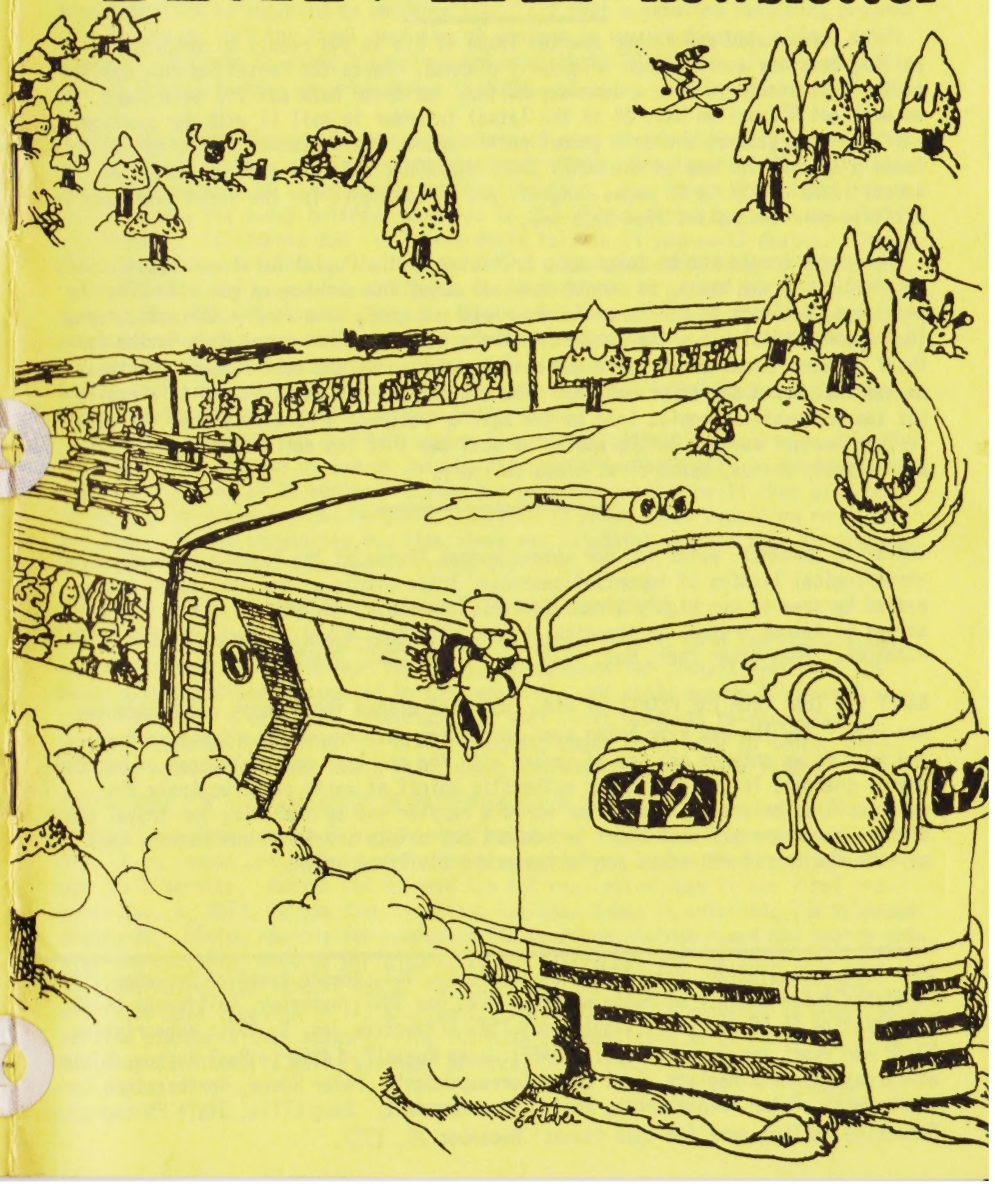
VOL. 3 NO. 24
SECOND ISSUE OF
DECEMBER 1973
#74

newsletter



ON THE COVER:

The "Snow Train," as depicted in advertisements by Northstar. Northstar this month became one of the first establishments at Lake Tahoe, California to promote rail travel to that ski area in response to the energy crisis. The Snow Train consists of reserved cars on the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR for week-long excursions, with bus transfer at Truckee. Departure dates from San Francisco/Oakland are Jan. 6, 13, 20, 27, and Feb. 3. Information available from Box 129, Truckee, CA 95734.

Snow might be the theme of this issue of RTN--see reports on the travel situation due to the heavy storms in late December in the East and Midwest; and Glenn Lee's article on an exciting RDC ride thru Canadian snow.

This abbreviated and rather spartan issue of RTN is the result of setting our mailing deadline earlier than originally planned. Seems the Postal Service decided at the last minute to have a four-day holiday for their bulk mailing department; so we must get RTN mailed Dec. 28 at the latest in order to mail it with our postage imprint--otherwise it couldn't go out until Jan. 2. We'd planned to include in this issue a special feature on the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, but that must be postponed. A normal issue of RTN is 20 pages long--if you're seeing it for the first time--and is a little more decorative than this one.

The above should not be taken as a criticism of the Postal Service. Despite all the criticisms one hears, we cannot complain about the service we get with RTN. By and large, delivery of RTN is uniformly rapid and good, even in the Christmas rush. In the continental U.S., the longest delivery time is within three days to the farthest points. Local subscribers get next-day delivery, and most readers get their copies the second day after mailing. The biggest problem we have--and it's really not too frequent--is copies lost in the mail or returned erroneously when the subscriber has not moved. On the whole, we must say that the mails function smoothly and reliably for us, using first class delivery.

COMING IN JANUARY: Watch for our unique annual Review of the Year--a convenient chronological listing of important passenger train events of the past year, accompanied by some of our highly biased editorial comments. We will also continue our series on Amtrak trains, in numerical order, with Nos. 9 and 10 next--the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA. Then after that, Nos. 11-12-13-14, the COAST STARLIGHT.

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE PEOPLE AT RTN. Our best wishes for a happy and prosperous new year. May the new year bring ever-increasing rail travel opportunities for you and me. As we enter a new era of coping with the problems and challenges of reduced energy sources, let us go with an optimistic spirit of using constructively the opportunities before us to make our world a happier one by improving our travel conditions so we may all move about in comfort and safety and in an environment that uplifts the spirit and makes people human and civilized again.

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 24 (Whole No. 74), Second Issue of December, 1973. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. Subscription $6.00 per year; single copy 25¢. (Effective Jan. 1, 1974: subscription $7.00 per year; single copy 30¢.) STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Kenneth Maylath, East Coast Correspondent; Peter Roehm, Northeastern Correspondent; Peter Putnam Bretz, Roving Correspondent; Doug Ellis, Staff Photographer. Scheduled mailing date for this issue: December 28, 1973.

PROGRESS IN ENERGY CONSERVATION MOVES SLOWLY

Congress adjourned for its winter recess without passing the bill to give the President emergency powers to handle the energy crisis. The House Dec. 22 voted down the compromise energy bill because the Senate had deleted a clause that would have set a tax on "windfall profits" of the oil companies. The following day the Arab oil suppliers announced a doubling of the price of crude oil. President Nixon's energy czar, William Simon, believes the Administration possesses enough authority for the time being to cope with the fuel shortage. As we go to press, the Administration is expected to announce (Dec. 27) that a gasoline rationing program will be set up, but the final decision of whether to use it delayed. Simon asked American motorists to limit themselves voluntarily to 10 gallons of gas per week, and the Administration reported later that the voluntary effort seemed to be working.

Over Christmas there were reduced numbers of cars on the highways, largely, it was believed, because of gas station closings. There were fewer traffic fatalities than usual because of lower speeds and less traffic. One survey showed 496 persons killed during the 4-day holiday, compared to 550-650 predicted by the National Safety Council. California had its lowest death toll in 21 years--43 deaths. Crackdowns on drunken driving by the Highway Patrol also apparently lowered the figure.

President Nixon, reported earlier to be planning train travel during the holiday, gave up the plans, apparently because they were too problemmatic, requiring safety precautions at too many points along rail lines. He drove to Camp David, Maryland, and on Dec. 26 secretly boarded a commercial airliner to fly to San Clemente. A United Air Lines jet took his party to California, where limousines brought them the remaining 70 miles to the Western White House.

The bill to establish daylight saving time until October 1975 was signed by the President Dec. 15, and at 2am on Jan. 6, the nation's clocks will be advanced one hour for a period of 15 months. States may proclaim exemptions if they will conserve fuel or prevent undue hardship. Arizona is known to be remaining on standard time. States straddling two time zones may establish uniform time throughout the state (see also Canada section, page 4).

COMMITTEE AGREES ON OPERATING SUBSIDIES FOR MASS TRANSIT

A joint House-Senate compromise committee agreed Dec. 19 upon new legislation to provide $400 million a year for operating expenses for transit systems. The Nixon administration is opposed to this approach, and wants a more "diffused" plan. To avoid a veto, the committee will wait until Congress re-assembles in January to formally approve the bill. Congress hopes to be able to muster the 2/3 vote required to override a veto, using the energy crisis as a lever.

AMTRAK ASKS FOR ICC REGULATION OF PASSENGER TRAIN STANDARDS

In a move that surprised many, Amtrak asked the Interstate Commerce Commission Nov. 26 to reopen proceedings regarding its regulation of the adequacy of passenger train service. Amtrak had opposed the ICC regulation when it was first proposed Dec. 6, 1971. Since then no action had been taken in enforcing the proposed standards. Giving reasons for reopening the hearings, Amtrak named the energy crisis, the declining on-time performance of the railroads, and the important fact that the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1973 directed the ICC to issue regulations within 60 days from the bill's enactment. Thus, the ICC is expected to promulgate service standards this January. The ICC case is identified as Ex Parte No. 277, Adequacy of Intercity Rail Passenger Service.

canadian news letter

COOKS CONTINENTAL TIMETABLE, starting January, 1974, will carry two pages of Canadian National railroad schedules, run as an advertisement in the manner Amtrak presently does. The first such timetable shows the SUPER CONTINENTAL running daily Montreal-Vancouver, and in the summer the second section, trains 3 and 4, running daily Toronto-Vancouver in addition. The first westbound No. 3 leaves June 22, the last Sept. 5. The eastbound No. 4 runs June 25 thru Sept. 8. (Thos Cook's address is 45 Berkeley Street, London W1A 1EB, England.)

HERE'S A CORRECTION: Canadian National has not discontinued prepaid sleeping car meals. As of November 1, sleeping car tickets may be purchased without the meal requirement at a discount from "with-meal" tariff.

RUMORS ARE STRONG that Canadian National is rebuilding its six ex-Milwaukee Road full dome cars to serve as combination diner-lounge cars. The downstairs lounge had once served as a coffee shop, and kitchen facilities were included in this 1952 equipment. Reportedly a number of CN people apparently think the changed arrangement will not work.

VANCOUVER WATERFRONT GOSSIP says that CP Rail's new "Carrier Princess" has some design flaws which help put a lot of sea water across her main deck in stormy weather. She'll be on the Nanaimo-Vancouver run until mid-January, as "Princess of Vancouver" will be late coming from refit. "Carrier Princess" makes one round trip per day weekdays (no Monday service) and two trips on weekends.

CN QUIETLY LEASED about 50 cars for the Christmas rush, many from Ontario Northland. With retirement of many CN heavyweights, CN cannot easily meet peak period passenger demand these days.

NORTHWARD-HO-HO-HO; and what would you like for Christmas, little girl? Lyn Hancock, writing in the Vancouver Sun reported that Santa Claus arrived at Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, this year on a narrow gauge White Pass & Yukon special train. Safety regulations and insurance requirements here terminated the old colorful practice of Whitehorse children riding the train out to Macrae to meet Santa. The Yukon has been suffering from the coldest weather of the century, with temperatures dropping to 60 below zero, so Santa has brought extra special cheer this holiday season.

BESIDES EXTENDING THE Seattle-Victoria, B.C. "Princess Marguerite" runs to a full six months in 1974, CP Rail has also lengthened the Port Angeles-Victoria season by thirteen days. The Port Angeles service will operate June 7-Sept. 8 (in 1973 it was June 15-Sept. 3.

"THE PEOPLE'S RAILWAY" was the title of a Canadian television special seen Dec. 17. It was billed as "the story of a large corporation, told through the words and actions of its people. A gutsy film, with portraits of individual Canadians set against Canadian backgrounds. A film that'll surprise and entertain you. The producer calls it "raw and honest, nothing fancy-phoney." You'll call it first-rate television viewing." The program was sponsored by CN.

CN We want you to know more about us.

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME will not be adopted nationwide in Canada, though the U.S. sets clocks ahead Jan. 6. Individual provinces may change time if they find being out of synch with the U.S. "just too much of a nuisance," in the words of Energy Minister Donald Macdonald. Will Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL now leave Vancouver at 5:30am? And will anyone be aboard?

FOR THE HUNGRY, FROM AMTRAK

by Ken Maylath

Amtrak has been featuring a new angle in food service in the Northeast Corridor of late. I sampled it to see how it stacks up against the snack bar coach service so much in vogue in recent years.

My sojourn began on train 170, the MINUTE MAN, departing Baltimore before 8am. The train consisted of about ten typical corridor cars including an ex-Pennsylvania snack bar coach, located in second position, right behind the parlor car. A middle aged woman ran the counter, very much the exception and certainly not in line with old Pennsy practice.

Those hoping for an early morning eye opener in the form of coffee were to be disappointed. The coffee-making apparatus was out--and stayed out. Hardly a way to win friends and influence people at that hour of a chilly December morning. Otherwise, the standard snack bar fare available, with the supply seeming to hold out fairly well as we headed north to New York and New England.

Between Baltimore and New York, No. 170 stayed close to, but usually not quite on schedule. A series of small delays was responsible, costing a couple minutes here, a couple there. The territory between New Brunswick and Newark was a particular dispatcher's nightmare, with numerous passenger trains--local and express--and a couple of freights in the middle of it all. Also, the southbound local track was closed at Elizabeth where a minor track relocation project is underway to reduce the severity of a sweeping S curve.

Through it all, we slipped into Penn Station, New York but 2 minutes late. A quick check upstairs showed the habitually tardy BROADWAY 90 minutes late, the METEOR one hour behind, and CHAMPION listed on time.

Leaving New York four minutes late, we had the parlor and five coaches, all completely full. Many departed at New Haven for the RDC connection to Springfield, including a New York City college basketball team heading to a game that night. About 5 mins late out of New Haven. Then, a problem-free journey to New London and Providence. We would have just about made up the 5-min deficit, except for a signal stop a mile or so from the Providence station. So, we arrived five behind.

Out of New Haven I checked out the snack bar fare and found my ham sandwich average--not as good as some I've had on Amtrak trains, but better than others. While most of the food on snack bars is rather constant, the sandwiches do vary, since the same company doesn't prepare all of them all the time. The snack cake and soft drink which completed my lunch offered no surprises.

Providence. One of those typical barn-like old New Haven stations, which no doubt have survived largely unchanged due to the precarious financial condition of the NH in its later years, not to mention the Penn Central which absorbed it. My stay was brief. Train 177, the SENATOR, was due in less than 15 minutes. Small notices posted at the ticket office informed patrons of the new service provided by the SHORELINER, the second turbo run which got rolling in mid-December.

The SENATOR, arriving a couple minutes late from Boston, featured several coaches (a couple not in use), parlor, and one of Amtrak's new specialty cars, placed on a couple Boston-Washington trains this fall. I was especially interested in the latter piece of equipment, never having checked one out before.

It appeared to be a former Seaboard car. It had the "Amtrak mod" look about it, with heavy use of purple and orange. The biggest part of the car was given over to tables. No lounge-type seating, just tables. Small two-seat affairs on one side, four-seaters on the other. At one end, a compact galley with serving counter. In reality this was a snack bar-diner-lounge. The standard snack fare was available, with a full complement of beer and booze. Also, a selection of airline-style dinners.

(continued on page 12)

PRESS TELLS OF AMTRAK "DEAL" ON FLORIDA SERVICE

The Chicago Sun-Times has reported that Amtrak President Roger Lewis made a deal with Florida Congressmen some months ago to keep Florida service unchanged if a House committee would hamper Auto-Train Corporation's service by requiring them to go thru lengthy ICC proceedings before starting up auto-carrying service between Florida and the Midwest. Thus, when Amtrak presented plans to change the Chicago-Florida FLORIDIAN to a day-night-day schedule instead of the existing night-day-night schedule, Florida legislators screamed, since the change would mean eliminating stops at Waldo and Ocala. A meeting with Amtrak officials was called, and it was agreed to retain the previous schedule (see article in our last issue). A subcommittee member told the Washington Star-News that he believed the schedule change had been made while Mr. Lewis was incapacitated by heart surgery, and apparently the decision was made without the knowledge of the deal with House members.

The new FLORIDIAN schedule became somewhat garbled in our last issue, and we reprint the correct schedule here: lv Chicago 8:30pm, ar Jacksonville 2:35am, lv Jacksonville 3:25am (via Ocala), ar Miami 11:10am (via Orlando, lv Jacksonville 3:10am, ar Tampa 8:45am, ar St. Petersburg 10:30am.) Lv Miami 5:30pm, ar Jacksonville 1:10am, lv Jacksonville 1:45am, ar Chicago 7am (via Ocala); (via Orlando, lv St. Pete 6pm, ar Tampa 7:30pm, lv Tampa 7:35pm, ar Jacksonville 1:15am, lv Jacksonville 1:45am, ar Chicago 7am.

THE RUNNING OF THE "INSIDE GATEWAY STARLIGHT"

Here in the far West one is almost embarrassed to be basking in mild Mediterranean weather while most of the rest of the nation is fighting severe winter storms and floods (last year we had our once-a-generation snow). But if there was no severe storm to disrupt rail travel, at least we had some freight cars derailing to create an unusual re-routing of Amtrak trains. As the Christmas travel season began Dec. 15, SP suffered a freight wreck near Mt. Shasta which resulted in a re-routing of the COAST STARLIGHT between Davis, CA and Klamath Falls, OR. For the first time, the train made several trips over Western Pacific tracks from Sacramento (on SP from Davis to Sacramento) thru the Feather River Canyon to Keddie, and thence up the freight-only WP "inside gateway" to Klamath Falls, where it rejoined the SP line. The first re-routing set the train about 7 hours late. Later, as crews got the hang of it, the train was arriving Oakland only about 1½ hours behind schedule. During this time, and much of the Christmas vacation, late arrivals at Oakland resulted in passengers being bused from Oakland to Los Angeles if they had to make connections with the SUPER CHIEF and SUNSET.

PROGRESS OF THE NEW TRAINS

The upcoming Chicago-Dubuque train, on ICG track, is scheduled to begin runs on Jan. 15. Called the WINNEBAGO, the new train, using 3 Budd RDC cars, will run westbound (train 371) daily and eastbound daily except Sunday (train 370); on Sunday an eastbound #372 will operate. It leaves Chicago 6:20pm, ar Dubuque at 11:03pm; leaves Dubuque 5:50am, ar Chicago 10:33am. The train was to start service in December, but was postponed mostly because of the condition of stations and platforms.

Another new train, between Chicago and Champaign, was to start operation Dec. 19 on ICG track. The ILLINI, #381 southbound and #380 northbound, will also use three rail diesel cars. It will leave Chicago daily at 3:50pm, ar Champaign at 6:15pm; leave Champaign at 8:30am, arrive Chicago 11am. The first run was to be from Champaign.

GOVERNMENT FUNDS FOR TRACK UPGRADING TO BE PROPOSED

When Congress returns from its winter recess in January, it will receive from the Nixon Administration a proposal for a bill to authorize $2 billion in federal loan guarantees to the railroad industry to allow it to upgrade deteriorating track and invest in other equipment needed for freight service.

Writing in the Wall Street Journal (Dec. 24), transportation writer Albert R. Karr points out that the proposed bill would also bring about some deregulation of the railroads, the Administration's favored method for helping the roads regain a sound financial footing. A previous piece of similar legislation failed because it also included deregulation of the trucking industry, which truckers opposed. The article describes a DOT spokesman's reference to the bill as "a real redirection of federal policy." The Administration waited for the Northeast Rail bill to get thru Congress before submitting its newest proposal.

NORTHEAST RAIL BILL TO BE SIGNED

As we go to press, President Nixon's signature is expected momentarily on the bill to restructure the bankrupt Northeast railroads, given final passage by Congress Dec. 21. The Amtrak-like organization that will run the trimmed-down roads is called the Consolidated Rail Corporation. A United States Railway Association will initially make the decisions about what trackage to include in the CRC's domain, and this plan will be subject to Congress's veto. The USRA can sell up to $1.5 billion in government-backed bonds to loan the new railroad that replaces seven bankrupt Northeast railroads including the Penn Central.

AMTRAK HAS A WHITE CHRISTMAS

Amtrak's biggest Christmas season yet is drawing to a close. Indications of heavy business started early, "fueled" by the energy crisis. Amtrak's phones rang, nationwide, half a million times during the first ten days of December. Some trains were sold out on certain dates even as December began, with a number solidly booked by Dec. 10 for the entire holiday period. It has become apparent, report East Coast observers, that the still expanding computerized reservation system is a major blessing.

Even as the holiday crush was gathering steam, at mid-month, the Northeast was hit with a major storm--snow, ice, sleet. In much of the mid-Atlantic, which enjoyed a mild winter last year, it was the heaviest snowfall in two years or more. Sleet and ice around New York City and Southern New England caused more problems than the snow itself. Particularly hard hit was the Long Island Rail Road. Ice-coated third rails and tracks stalled many trains, leaving thousands of passengers stranded between stations for many hours on Dec. 17.

As for Amtrak, ice on the catenary caused a reduction in Metroliner speeds to 80 for a time that day, automatically guaranteeing delays of 30 to 60 minutes. Then another problem put some Metros out of service for a day or longer--the engine air-cooling vents, unfortunately located low on the train sides, became clogged with snow and ice particles kicked up by the train's motion, causing engine overheating. Some Metroliners were hauled by the old reliable GG-1 electrics. (Four Metroliners have been rebuilt to relocate the cooling vents.)

Many conventional trains were also delayed--1 or 2 hours was not uncommon. In all of this, there was an extra load of travelers diverted from treacherous highways and other modes. Amtrak used as much equipment as possible. Many four-car Metroliners have been lengthened to the maximum of six cars. Most routes were given large increases in capacity.

The Midwest and the Rockies were also hit by very heavy snowfalls, and it was observed that some trains were running well behind schedule. The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR completed its westbound run 5 hours late on Dec. 26.

FROM DRUMHELLER, WITH COURAGE

by Glenn Lee

There are lots of good things about life in Alberta, including many proper and polite people, and a scarcity of street crime, even in a big city like Edmonton. The reverse of the coin is the bitterly cold winter weather. In early 1972, Edmonton had suffered thru many intensely cold days, including one astounding morning when I hoofed to work at 42 below zero. Not as bad as early 1969, when Edmonton went more than 45 days without the mercury ever rising above the zero mark. It once dropped to -54°. Some Canadian National PANORAMA and SUPER CONTINENTAL trains froze to the tracks at the Edmonton station in 1969, resisting all CN efforts to budge them, disrupting passenger service badly.

So I had to agree with a charming young English school teacher with whom I waited at a bus stop one freezing afternoon: In her Glynnis Johns accent she said it all--"How do people ever stand this perpetual refrigeration week after week?"

On the first Friday in March, 1972, on my way to work, I heard a radio weather report announce that a warm Chinook wind was blowing in Calgary, 180 miles to the south. That was all I needed to know. I packed a suitcase at noon and made a dash to the now-closed CP Rail Jasper Avenue station for the 5:20pm RDC car to Calgary. It was below zero as I waited for the RDC to be backed in. The car was late, having suffered some running gear problems on the trip north that morning.

I thought of the enormous natural phenomenon that is the Chinook wind, a warm blast of air which descends the east side of the Rockies in Alberta and Montana in winter, one of a family of foehn winds (as they are known in Europe) which includes the Canterbury Nor'wester in New Zealand. These swift and dry warm winds are called "Snow-eaters" by the Indians, and are announced by a "Chinook Arch" of clouds over the mountains to the west. They are unpredictable. In 1938, one Chinook wind traveled east as far as Winnipeg, Man., altho most disappear about 100 miles east of the mountains. On the old GN line east of Shelby, Mont., a Chinook once raised temperatures 73 degrees in three minutes--from -20° to 53°--with its sudden arrival.

My thought was to get to Calgary to warm up a bit; and to bounce around town. It's fun to attend shows, eat at restaurants, and prowl bookstores in Calgary when a Chinook is blowing. The warm wind feels so good; and it's even better when shared with others in a crowd (even strangers), as they are having a good time, too.

En route to Calgary, our CP Budd car came within sight of the Chinook Arch near LaCombe, and probably passed thru the warm front south of Red Deer, the halfway point. It was 38° in Calgary when our RDC pulled into the enclosed platform, directly under the Husky (now Calgary) Tower. This was some 40° warmer than Edmonton had been and it felt like a heat wave.

The weekend in Calgary passed all too quickly, and at 5:45pm Sunday I took the Coachways bus for Drumheller. This 2-hour run is operated by a Greyhound subsidiary. East from Calgary it grew colder, and a modest wind came up. I had hoped that we were only leaving the Chinook zone, but feared (more correctly) that a new Arctic mass of cold air was bearing down upon us.

Arrival in Drumheller was 7:45pm, on time, and I checked into a motel adjacent to the bus station, also across from the CN depot.

Drumheller is one of the more "eeuch" places in Alberta. Formerly a prominent coal mining town, situated deep in a large badlands Coulee, only two of the 30 or more mines are working, and the detritus resembles the worst in Appalachia. The prison adds to the gloom. Despite this, I had my best steak dinner in three years in Canada, and eagerly anticipated my ride north to Edmonton on Monday morning's CN Budd-car run, leaving at 7:30am. This is the weakest of CN's three (formerly four) RDC runs from Edmonton, and runs over the lightest track; with freights restricted to 30mph, but RDC cars are allowed 65! I had planned to see the RDC-2 arrive Sunday night at 9:40pm; but it grew steadily colder, and the wind picked up, so I turned in, content to listen to the car whistle in on time before falling asleep.

At 3am I was awakened by a howling, shrieking gale. Even my concrete-block motel seemed to be shaking and I thought of the storm in Shakespeare that came up after MacBeth murders the king; or W. C. Fields opening his door in a snow storm and chanting: "'Taint a fit night out for man nor beast."

I slept fitfully and arose at 6:15am. At breakfast I heard a farmer say to the waitress: "Really blew up on top last night. Lots of cars in the ditch this morning." The waitress replied: "Well, it blew down here, too," just a little indignantly.

I climbed aboard the RDC unit a few minutes before the 7:30am departure time. There were four passengers--one for Edmonton (me), a farmhand for Big Valley one hour and eight minutes out, and two transferring to the SUPER CONTINENTAL.

There is no wye in Drumheller, so the morning run operates backwards 12 miles up the Coulee, turns up a tight side canyon, and then to a wye at Dinosaur, "on top." I looked sadly as we passed thru the poverty zone; and then with interest as we moved up the side canyon on a steady grade. Up front, there were strange bump-thump noises. When I looked thru the car door to the track ahead, I could not see the rails. The blowing wind had covered them, and our RDC car was serving as its own snowplow. Every few hundred feet a large mound of snow indicated a heavy drift and "KA-THUMPLE," we plunged into it noisily. Snow shot straight up the front of the car, covering all three windows and blotting out the engineer's vision.

Once "on top" at Dinosaur, we floated on an infinite sea of freshly blown snow. There had been little precipitation as the cold front moved in during the night --only wind. The chilly gale had redistributed most of the snow that had escaped the Chinook. The switches at Dinosaur were swept; but I could see no evidence of track crews. Had they come by helicopter?

Our cold and lonely RDC drifted across the highway at Dinosaur and pointed north, attempting to hurry this cold March morning to keep a tight schedule. The wying process had put the baggage end forward; but I could occasionally peek thru an opened door. There was no rail visible at all! We were a tiny stainless steel icebreaker sailing on an immense ice ocean!

I sat quietly, but grew increasingly tense as the snow grew deeper over the tracks. The RDC's engines roared louder and louder to keep up speed. But it was an impossible task, and we gradually fell behind time. The bumping and thumping grew louder, and I wondered how the steel-nerved engineer was handling himself, not to mention the car. Soon, angry and roaring tornadoes of snow swirled by the windows. Every few minutes all vision was blotted as great snow drifts, angered into sudden flight by the RDC's pilot, surged over and around the car. It was like riding the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR thru the washrack; but here wild and raging snow substituted for water and chamois brushes!

What a sight this would be from a helicopter, I thought. One lone, gutsy, determined RDC car plunging thru the snowy northern Canadian winter on rails no one could see, let alone even find an outline for!

The "Bump-Kathump" became increasingly louder, and our RDC engines roared as they lugged to make headway thru the drifts. At Big Valley we stopped to set off the farmhand in the community of 700 souls. Big Valley looked entirely deserted except for some CN section hands, busy sweeping platforms and cleaning switches. We were already 12 minutes late.

Getting started again was a major effort, and the RDC car was filled with an enormous roar as pilot bitterly engaged snowdrift. BOOM-THUMPLE-BOOM-BOOM-KA-RUNCHLE came the furious pro-

tests as once again vision was blotted by the swirling snow. "How do you ever get into situations like this?" I asked myself, now becoming quite aware of the possibility that we might derail and be stuck here, perhaps for days if the wind arose again. I started to perspire a little. Boom. Thump. Bang-bump went the car; and a few eternities later under a light gray cloudbank that joined horizon indistinguishably to sky, we arrived at Stettler, thriving business community of 5,000. We were about 25 minutes late. The Budd disc brakes were soaking wet, and didn't hold well, and we sailed a block or two past a crowd of 12-15 passengers. "We'll be right back," said the conductor.

North of Stettler the drifts grew deeper, and altho grimly holding to the rails, it looked as if the snow would be too much for our RDC. We lugged down to 25, then 20 in the 65 mph zones. We stopped at Donalda and received a passenger; then backed up perhaps a quarter-mile for a run at the uncleared track ahead. KA-BOOOOM went the car, shuddering independently of the vibration from the racing motor. The same at Meeting Creek, where a friendly, overweight Ukrainian woman got on. We were now about 40 minutes late. "Really warming up now," she said. "Only got down to zero last night."

The car had some 25 passengers now, many of them feeling the tension. We passed Edberg and Viewpoint. Still no sign of a plow or any freight train activity which might have cleared the line. The speed rose and fell with the depth of the snow. Great hunks of snow continued to blot the engineer's vision and swirl angrily around the car. The sun finally appeared, raising spirits. It was taking sheer guts and courage to run this RDC, I thought.

Finally, we arrived at Ferlow Junction, where CN's Calgary line joins the Stettler sub. Rescue and relaxation! A Calgary freight train had passed, clearing the line! Six easy miles to Camrose, and the conductor could be heard saying: "Yeah, another inch or so and we wouldn't have made it!"

A quick stop at Camrose with a refreshment wagon on the platform. Including tea. I recall Sydney Smith, 19th-Century English writer: "Thank God for tea. I am so glad I was not born before tea." And then off on the 70-minute run to Edmonton. A few slow orders; but the snow, cleared by the freight, was no problem. We arrived at Edmonton almost 50 minutes late, at 12:35pm, and about 50 passengers piled off. I watched the car leave for the engine terminal. Other than some snow lodged on the front, there was no sign of the struggle. I guess it's always that way in the North.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"I can't honestly say that present day railroad management is the exact epitome of the 20th Century's modern American businessman. Traditionally, on a railroad, you worked your way up. Very slowly and very deliberately. While the rest of American industry was starting to be infiltrated with 'whiz kids' ten or fifteen years ago, the railroad industry still took great pride in its male secretaries, its typewriter drop-cloths, its old oaken desks and even occasionally a green eyeshade."

--Federal Railroad Administrator John W. Ingram in lecture at Univ. of Pennsylvania, Nov. 19

"The long, overnight train ride south to Florida is a slow railroad ballad with many choruses and small-town refrains. It can be rare solitude or a romantic interlude. Bingo with the old ladies or cocktails and cards in the club car, movies and sandwiches in the lounge car or red wine and New York sirloin in the dining car. But, perhaps most intriguing of all, there is that exciting youthful feeling of going off on some kind of adventure, of somehow escaping back into an easier past when the world walked instead of ran."

--John Sherwood in Washington Star-News, Dec. 14

Urban-Suburban Transit

THAT BIG STRIKE of transit workers in Edmonton, Canada, was expected to be settled soon as the month drew to a close. The strike began Nov. 29, and negotiations broke off for ten days before the parties resumed talks...

THE C&NW RAILWAY came up with a plan this month by which passengers can travel to downtown Chicago on Saturday for only $1 (regular fares range up to $3.80). On Dec. 15 the commuter railroad reported it had 28,000 riders, compared to 16,000 a year earlier...

AC TRANSIT REPORTED a rise in trans-bay (Eastbay to San Francisco) bus riders of over 12% in November, after the energy crisis talks by President Nixon. This was considered an extraordinary increase...

NEW YORK CITY'S half-fare Sunday experiment (see last issue) seems to have been successful thus far. The MTA began Dec. 16 selling half-fares to allow people to reach Manhattan without use of automobiles on "gasless Sundays." On the second Sunday of the 5-week experiment (the first Sunday was stormy), "thousands" of people took advantage of the transit bargain, reports the New York Times. Long Island Rail Road and Penn Central commuter trains were reported filled. In addition, an auto-free holiday mall on Fifth Avenue the 23rd attracted crowds of pedestrians, many using the MTA's pink half-fare coupons...

AMTRAK IS BEING urged to change weekend schedules of the BLUE RIDGE, the Washington to Cumberland, MD train by Congressmen and labor leaders. At present the train deadheads each weekend and holiday from Cumberland to Washington in the morning to start its first run back to Cumberland; on Sunday evening it must deadhead back to Cumberland to be ready for Monday morning's trip to Washington. The request asks Amtrak to carry passengers on these deadheading trips. In a letter to Amtrak's Roger Lewis, Senator Beall of Maryland said, "With our nation facing a fuel shortage and gasless Sundays, it makes no sense at all to see a passenger train making two 150-mile trips between Washington and Cumberland without even allowing passengers to ride the train"...

NEW RAPID TRANSIT cars, 100 of them, are to be built for the Chicago Transit Authority by the Boeing Vertol Co. of Philadelphia, the low bidder for the $29.4 million contract. Vertol is also building new streetcars for Boston and San Francisco. The Chicago cars will be 48 feet long and of stainless steel...

THE FORMER MAYOR of Seattle, J. D. Braman, this month called for the Federal Government to divert $7 billion or more of highway trust fund money into a "Transit Trust Fund" to let the government pay 90% of the cost of urban transit construction, with the rest coming from state gasoline tax revenues. Meanwhile, the Federal Highway Administration is warning that the energy crisis could seriously curtail the Highway Trust Fund money available for highway purposes in 1974. The FHA estimates, as an example, that if a 30% reduction in gasoline usage is required in 1974, decreased gas tax receipts would cut Trust Fund income for the highway program by some $3.3 billion...

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, says one report, is making a major policy shift to support subsidies for operations of transit systems. Secretary Brinegar told Congress Dec. 11 that the Administration will be recommending a "broader approach" to helping mass transit by supporting the use of federal funds for operating subsidies, an idea heretofore disapproved by the Administration...

ADVERTISEMENT - PROPOSED TRAIN CHANGES

SAN DIEGAN// //STARLIGHT	SUNSET	SAN JOAQUIN	VEGAN SAN DIEGAN	LARK	SUPER CHIEF			SAN JOAQUIN// //SAN DIEGAN	VEGAN SAN DIEGAN	STARLIGHT	SUPER CHIEF	LARK	SUNSET
	1p					Lv	New Orleans	Ar					7p
					6p	Lv	Chicago	Ar			3.05p		
				9p		Lv	San Francisco	Ar				8.30a	
7a			5.55a			Lv	San Diego	Ar	7.35p	11.35p			
9.35a	7.30a		8.30a	8.30a	8.35a	Ar	Los Angeles	Lv	5.30p	9p	9p	9p	8.55p
--			THRU	THRU			AMPAC BUSES		--	THRU		THRU	
10 05a		9a	9a	9a		Lv	Los Angeles	Ar	5p	8.30p	7.25p	8.30p	
			3.30p			Ar	Las Vegas	Lv		2p			
				11.35a		Ar	San Diego	Lv				5.55p	
		6p				Ar	Stockton	Lv	8a				
		6.05p				Lv		Ar	7.55a				
8.40p		8.20p				Ar	San Francisco	Lv	5.45a		8.45a		

	Optional Add SAN DIEGAN			Summary of San Diego Corridor Trains MEXICOACHES				Optional Add SAN DIEGAN	
7a	2.15p	5.55a	5.55p	Lv	San Diego	Ar	7.35p	11.35p	1.05p	11.35a
			Lv 6.45		(Pass @ Oceanside)		6.40 Lv			
9.35a	4.50p	8.30a	8.30p	Ar	Los Angeles	Lv	5.30p	9p	10.30a	9a
		THRU	THRU					THRU		THRU

LARK--Provides badly needed overnight through pullman service from San Diego. Connects with SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR.
SUNSET LIMITED--Leaves Los Angeles 5 minutes earlier.
SUPER CHIEF--Leaves Chicago ½hr. earlier, disrupting no connections, making all Los Angeles connections.
--Leaves Los Angeles 1½hrs. later, permitting better STARLIGHT/P.I. scheduling from Vancouver; misses westbound EMPIRE BUILDER, but GEORGE WASHINGTON cities served via NATIONAL LIMITED.
SAN JOAQUIN--All-rail service has San Diego connections (new), would stop at San Fernando (new), serve Valencia-Saugus, Lancaster, Mojave, Bakersfield (new downtown station location), Stockton (new), has transcontinental Los Angeles connections (new) with one-transfer only at LAUPT-- example: New Orleans to Fresno--California Public Utilities Commission tested bus-rail and all-rail passenger preferences and passengers preferred all-rail (D.70939).
VEGAN SAN DIEGAN--Provides Los Angeles arrival outbound in time for business day. LARK connection. Pasadena, N.Pomona, San Bdno.
SAN JOAQUIN's SAN DIEGAN Connection--Provides Los Angeles departure at close of business day.
STARLIGHT--Southbound schedule is one hour later, allowing PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL to leave Vancouver at 7.30a instead of 6.30a.
LARK and VEGAN SAN DIEGAN operate with intact consist through Los Angeles, including parlor, pullman, dining svcs as appropriate.
Optional Add SAN DIEGAN utilizes a trainset for an additional roundtrip.
AMPAC buses Long Beach/Anaheim--LA Union Station. MEXICOACHES San Diego Station--Tijuana.
Southbound SAN JOAQUIN timed to allow one-day return from points as far south as Bakersfield, incl. full Stockton business day.

THE LOS ANGELES CONNECTION -- A Catalysis, by **Robert J. Swan**
A Professional Service of transit leadership - public transit catalyst
Box 1866, Long Beach, CA 90801

(continued from page 5)

The three-man crew seemed quite efficient. One manned the galley, the other two the tables. It was a table service-only proposition. That is, even those coming in for coffee-to-go were seated and served. This, of course, prevented jam-ups at the counter.

The lunch-dinner menu showed three selections. Salisbury Steak went for $2.75 and Chicken Breast Chasseur or Pork Kowloon (Chinese) for $3.75. This included the complete meal--with consomme, lettuce and tomato salad, roll, beverage and peach imperial for dessert. The menu card warned of a 25-minute wait for preparation, but also invited patrons to enjoy a complimentary bottle of wine. I ordered the Chicken Chasseur and settled back to watch the comings and goings in the car, as well as the eastern Connecticut countryside flashing by the window.

A disadvantage of this type of meal service is that everything comes at once. You don't have the opportunity to munch on a roll or nibble the salad while waiting for the main course. The food was certainly better and more generous in quantity than a typical TV dinner. The silverware, enclosed in a plastic packet, was full-sized. Little containers of salad dressing, salt, pepper and a generous pat of butter, were included. The chicken came with egg noodles and mixed vegetables. All in all, it was pretty tasty, with enough quantity to please most appetites. The wine turned out to be a Rosé from Portugal--quite satisfactory--especially at no extra cost. In this day and age the $2.75 or $3.75 price could not be considered high. Perhaps the biggest factor in preparation is insuring correct time in the oven--and they can vary a little. My meal would have been better with another couple minutes cooking.

These cars are a considerable improvement over the usual snack bar setup. Passengers have a place to sip and snack, in attractive surroundings offering a lot of seating capacity. At the same time, an expensive dining car operation is avoided. It's a pretty good compromise for trains with rather long runs, but where many passengers are traveling rather short distances and don't plan to eat heavy meals along the way. Apparently the food arrangements in these specialty cars are similar to those on the Midwestern Turboliners. It is understandable that some would complain about the substitution of this system for regular dining service, but when substituted for snack bar coaches the reaction is bound to be generally positive. Travelers in the Northeast would no doubt welcome Amtrak's new specialty cars on all Boston-Washington runs.

Train 177, by the way, eased out of New Haven on time, but ran into a couple of minor delays into New York. Arrival there was at 7pm--just when we should have been leaving. We pulled out in less than 10 minutes, but ran into problems at Newark, where the 7:05 train to Philadelphia and a Jersey Central local were both about to leave--and had to get out of the way before we could proceed. From there to Philadelphia--non-stop--we moved right along, easing into 30th St. station 10mins late. A quick stop, then on to Wilmington, with a loss of several minutes because of a pass by the following Metroliner, which was several minutes late. A good run between Wilmington and Baltimore brought me back home between 5 and 10 minutes late. Thanks to the SENATOR's specialty car I didn't have to worry about a late dinner.

SECOND TURBO ADDED IN DECEMBER

An additional round trip between New York and Boston is available as of the mid-December Amtrak schedule change (but no timetables showing the new service were available to the public when it began). This is a second Turbo round trip each day (except Sat.), restoring the Turbo frequency available before the October timetable revision, and in line with recent practice not specifically listed as a Turbo. Called the SHORELINER, it leaves Boston at 9:10am, arriving N.Y. at 1:10, leaving N.Y. at 2:10pm, and arriving back in Boston at 6:05. The difference in running times is due to a stop at Old Saybrook, CT, on the N.Y.-bound trip.

page 12

mixed train of thoughts

"LET THE GOOD Times Roll," reads a happy postage meter slogan from the Amtrak station in Milwaukee. Whoever thought up that slogan to accompany Amtrak's logo, succeeded in brightening our day..... THE VERMONT ASSOCIATION of RR Passengers this month called for the resumption of day train service in that state. According to VARP, Amtrak is planning such a service by 1976 to serve the Bi-Centennial celebrations and the Montreal Olympics. The Association is launching a campaign to get the train running sooner than that, asking people to write Amtrak or Governor Salmon..... AND WHAT IS the "fiendly" SP doing to help the fuel shortage? In response to a query on a possible commute traffic increase due to the energy crisis, from a national magazine, an SP spokesman replied, "...one measure we're taking is to operate non-air-conditioned cars on weekends to save fuel used by air-conditioning units, altho we'll keep air-conditioned cars on for the Christmas shopping season." But won't lack of air conditioning lead to lack of passengers, which leads to more cars, which worsens the fuel shortage, and... but you get the point.....

* * *

AMTRAK TICKET AGENTS can now write tickets thru to Long Beach, CA and other points on American Pacific bus lines, as well as to Tijuana, Mexico on Mexicoach. Thus one ticket can be issued from or to Long Beach throughout the Amtrak system (and Southern and Rio Grande) and be honored on the buses (separate coupons, of course)..... AT MONEE, ILLINOIS on Dec. 26 an Amtrak train struck a truck, seriously injuring the truck driver. No further details at this time..... THE CANADIAN NATIONAL TurboTrains are tentatively back again between Toronto and Montreal, as of Dec. 17. The Turbo made a test run on the route the 15th without mishap. They are running supllementary service to the Rapidos over the holidays, and may replace a Rapido in April if all goes well..... BESIDES THE EAST Coast, New England and the Midwest, the South has been hit by severe weather this month--heavy flooding reported in Tennessee and Alabama, and some tornadoes. No report yet on the effect on travel there..... THAT GREYHOUND CLAIM of fuel economy reported in the last issue is a little off, says a DOT man. The study it was based on used train data from the declining ridership years of 1950-1970, and the overall load factor on the trains in its calculations was only 37%. Amtrak, of course, is doing much better than that with loadings, and thus fuel economy..... SECRET FARE INCREASES have received the attention of the Washington Star and the National Ass'n of RR Psgrs (Dec. newsletter). The newspaper claims that Amtrak's public relations department was ordered not to announce the fare increases (reported here in our Second October issue). So far we have had no negative correspondence about the increased tariffs, however..... GREATER CLEVELAND AREA is pressing for better mass transit and a moratorium on highway construction. A 5-county study of transit in Northern Ohio has suggested that the state inaugurate a lottery to raise funds for transportation needs..... C&NW'S PLAN TO raise commuter fares over 7% has been suspended by the Illinois Commerce Commission until April 30..... BOSTON AND MAINE Railroad has printed plastic wallet-sized 1974 calendars with the slogan, "Avoid traffic jams and parking problems--Take the train and arrive relaxed." You could probably get one by sending the B&M Director of Commuter Services (150 Causeway St., Boston, MA 02114) a 10¢ stamped, self-addressed envelope..... INTERESTING PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTICLE on Amtrak's computerized reservation system, refurbishing work, etc., appeared in U.S. News & World Report magazine, Dec. 24..... ON DECEMBER 20 workmen removed the illuminated Santa Fe signs at the Pasadena, CA depot and replaced them with attractive but modestly proportioned Amtrak counterparts. After New Year's, Pomona, Fullerton and Santa Ana will get them, reports Mike Blaszak..... BRITISH COMMUTER TRAIN derailed in London Dec. 19, killing 10 and injuring 53. The train was loaded with 600 riders. The derailment occurred in the same place as one about 18 months earlier.....

THE ENERGY CRISIS--and lessening newsprint supplies--, resulting in a probable mandatory 3-day work week in 1974, have caused the famous Cooks Continental Timetable to revise its publication schedule. There will still be 12 issues in 1974, but there will be five summer service editions instead of four, and seven winter service editions instead of eight. Continental summer services will appear in the May 26 edition, and British summer services (effective from May 6) in the April 26 edition. The Sept. 29 issue will contain the winter services. An advance summer service supplement will appear in the Jan. 1, Feb. 15, Mar. 29, and Apr. 26 editions. The print order will be reduced, so readers are advised to subscribe or order individual copies in advance of publication to insure availability. (See address on p.4)..... AMTRAK HAS BEGUN advertising in Travelnews, a weekly London publication for travel agents--big 2-page color ads giving sample Amerail discounted (25%) fares and urging agents to push Amtrak service, offering a 10% commission with "just one phone call" to one of four British Amtrak representatives..... THE NATIONAL OBSERVER ran an upbeat article on Amtrak (Dec. 1) entitled "Amtrak Clicketies With Fewer Clunks"--interesting and well-written..... BESIDES THE PUSH to restore the San Francisco-Monterey (CA) DEL MONTE train, Tourism groups in Monterey have been urged by the Sierra Club to subsidize a bus connection from the COAST DAYLIGHT/STARLIGHT at Salinas to the Monterey Peninsula.....

Express Ads

TROLLEY FARE BOX, $45.00 + shipping, Official Guides, 1950's-60's, Trolley transfers, tickets, RMC + T&M back issues, Trolley negatives, B&M RR dining car paper place mats with Minuteman emblem @ .85 each. SASE for lists of above and more to: Kevin T. Farrell RT, 28 Woods Ave, Somerville, MA 02144.

WE JUST DISCOVERED a book of interest to railfans and fans of poet Allen Ginsberg--56 paperback pages, each printed on a movie frame of a Santa Fe passenger train passing. Flip thru the book and the train appears to move. Title: "Iron Horse." $3 plus 25¢ postage from Message Media, Book Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Californians please add sales tax.

Modern light rail streetcars--"limited tramlines"--are proven in Europe, gaining favor fast here. Their low-cost reality may overtake the costly will-o'-the-wisp "personalized rapid transit" chosen by 57% of Denver voters last September 7th, precincts along the Littleton railroad corridor dissenting. And now the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad has offered its Littleton trackage to the Regional Transportation District for commuter trains at cost-plus. No compensation really covers the aggravation, but there is the knowledge that a reality of improving transportation is vital to continuing metropolitan progress. Greater love for its home community hath no railroad, than it offer its tracks for commuter trains. Thou Denver hath been loved, and this is a stunning proposal. Be thou worthy. In gratitude lies wisdom. --Robert J. Swan, transit leadership - public transit catalyst, Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.

HOW TO ADVERTISE IN THIS NEWSLETTER: EXPRESS ADS (80 typewriter characters & spaces per line) cost just 25¢ per line (minimum $1). DISPLAY ADS: $10 full page (5x8 inches); half page $5; quarter page $2.50; eighth page $1.25 (prices are for camera-ready copy for offset printing--final size, black ink; extra modest charge for reductions, enlargements, halftone preparation). Send remittance with orders under $10 to: Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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